



June 4, 2014

The Honorable Rick Scott
Office of the Governor
The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

RE: SB 850 Veto

Dear Governor Scott:

Fund Education Now joins a large and influential list of public education advocates calling on you to veto SB 850. We are diverse, non-partisan citizen-driven groups with hundreds of thousands of members standing in strong opposition to both the content of SB 850 and the bad-faith political maneuver used by the Senate to lump several poorly conceived bills together to force passage in the last hours of session.

We are deeply troubled that SB 850, a train of un-related substantive bills, contains new language that was never debated in committee. The House staff analysis of HB 7033, the companion to SB 850, includes numerous warnings that "positions appear disconnected from the provisions of the bill heard and passed by the House Education Committee."

To date, the following groups are demanding that you veto SB 850: the Florida PTA, Florida School Boards Association, Parents Across America Florida, Florida Conference of NAACP, Florida Educators Association, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Hispanic Coalition of Miami, Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD), Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Service Center, LULAC International Embassy and the League of Women Voters.

In the months ahead Florida public schools face an enormous transition fraught with uncertainty and challenge. Our plate is full. Not one of the four bills found in SB 850 are essential or so well-crafted that they are ready to be implemented at this time.

Florida cannot keep expanding the base for vouchers, weakening means testing and diverting billions of potential state tax revenues to private religious schools. It's fundamentally unfair to exempt voucher schools from every shred of accountability deemed so essential for public schools. Additionally, it's irresponsible to add a new voucher entitlement that could jeopardize benefits already in place for ESE students. We oppose the inequity of issuing debit cards on a first come first served basis with the potential to exclude participants when public schools accept all students, no questions asked. Voters have no assurance that the PLS debit card voucher "approved vendor list" won't be used to curry political favors and cause the program to balloon past its allotted \$18.4 billion.

The lack of detail and thought behind the bills in SB 850 signals an astonishing capacity for a negative fiscal impact on a large scale. We ask that you remind legislators that Florida Public schools are their paramount duty and veto SB 850 as soon as it hits your desk.

Respectfully submitted,

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